



From Handshakes to Health Care, A Message to Kentucky Farmers: You Are Appreciated!

A Special Publication From The Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Raising Hope Program To Kentucky's Farmers, Their Neighbors And Friends.

RAISING HOPE

DALE DOBSON: 1960-2026 He Lived His Best Life, Planned His Legacy

As this publication made its way into the final stages of production, Dale Dobson unexpectedly passed away. As Director of Farm Safety and Rural Health, Dale took the lead on the content of this Raising Hope special publication. Together, Dale and editor Sharon Burton created the concept for this publication after Dale voiced a desire to reach families – farmers and their neighbors – across Kentucky with a message of hope. Dale's final column is published below, and in it you will find that he had committed himself to the very message he wanted this edition of Raising Hope to relay – LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE; PLAN YOUR LEGACY. One of Dale's final acts was sharing his recent personal



Dale Dobson will long be remembered for his passion for Kentucky farmers and their families to stay safe and healthy. Here, he is shown introducing one of his most recent projects, a new grain bin safety trailer that will be used for rescue training.

health challenge in hopes of helping farmers face their own fears of seeking help when needed. On behalf of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, we share this message to honor Dale's life and legacy, and to remind you all that Dale cared about you, we care about you, and "you are appreciated!"



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From Ag Commissioner
Jonathan Shell:

Ky. Agriculture Has Lost a Great Champion

Kentucky agriculture has lost a great champion. Dale Dobson dedicated his life's work to protecting Kentucky's farm families through his unwavering commitment to farm safety and rural health. His leadership, compassion, and vision transformed agricultural safety across our Commonwealth and left an enduring impact that will continue for generations.

Dale knew our farmers live and work for a higher purpose. They are the backbone of civilization, providing the food and fiber needs for their family, their state, their country, and their world. What they do takes a dedication not everyone has. It takes someone special to tackle the hard work, the long hours, and the risks that come along with it.

Alleviating those risks was Dale's passion. For Dale, and for all of us at the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, even just one farm accident is one too many. He understood an accident meant a community's loss and a family's heartbreak.

Dale joined the Kentucky Department of Agriculture in 1998 under former Commissioner Billy Ray Smith and was tasked with starting the Department's farm safety program. Over the past 28 years, Dale faithfully served three other commissioners before I had the privilege of appointing him Director of Farm Safety and Rural Health.

His passion made him well known in national and even international farm safety circles.

Throughout his career, Dale championed initiatives that saved countless lives, including Kentucky's nationally recognized grain bin rescue training program. Just last year, five Kentucky farmers survived grain bin entrapments because first responders had received the training Dale helped create.

Dale understood that protecting farmers meant caring for both their physical safety and their mental well-being. Alongside Dr. Cheryl Witt, he helped establish Raising Hope, bringing much-needed attention and resources to farmer mental health. He also created the Challenge Coin Farmer Suicide

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The April 1 Phone Call



Dale Dobson
Director
Kentucky Department of Agriculture
Division of Farm Safety and Rural Health

Sometimes one phone call can change your life. You never know what's coming next. Some days are good. Some days are bad. That's just life. The question is what we make of it. For more than 37 years I've spent my career teaching farm safety, about life and death, about making good, safe decisions to protect your family. The number one thing I've always said is this: It's your farm, your family, your choice, your future, your decision. We live in a country where we have the freedom to make our own decisions. At the same time, we have to live with those decisions – good or bad. Earlier this year, I got a phone call from my doctor. She told me I needed to do some things differently. That kind of phone call makes you stop and think. It makes you start looking at life differently. You begin making plans you never thought you'd have to make. Then, on April 1, she called again. She said, "I think you've got leukemia. We need to do some more tests." That'll make a fella sit down and think. You start asking yourself how

you're going to leave this world someday. More importantly, how can you make it easier on your wife, your kids and your family when that day comes? I had a will, but it was many years old and badly outdated. So I sat down. I talked with friends. I talked with family. I made plans. I updated paperwork. I decided how I wanted things handled.

If you are farming for your family, farming for your future, and trying to protect your farm and your land, then you need a plan.

Sometimes we have to make those hard decisions ahead of time. If you're farming for your family, farming for the future, and trying to protect your farm and your land, then you need a plan. Put it in writing. Get it notarized. Tell the people who need to know. Make your wishes clear. Doing those things can make life a whole lot easier for the people you love. Now, doctors may tell you one thing. Prayer may tell you another. But here's what I've learned through all of this: a

whole lot comes down to what you believe. If you're determined to keep moving forward, then keep moving forward. Get up every morning and decide you're going to make the best of the day, no matter what comes. I truly believe your attitude has a lot to do with your health. Stay positive. Now, that's enough about me. Fall harvest season is coming, and I'm tired of reading stories about farmers getting run over by tractors or being hit while moving equipment down the road. So here's what we're going to do. Make yourself visible. If you're going to be on the highway, make it impossible for people to miss you. Put the slow-moving vehicle sign on the back. Turn on your flashers. Use escort vehicles when you can. Put someone in front of you. Put someone behind you. Do everything possible to protect yourself. One of the things I learned working for the government was a simple phrase: CY* — Cover Your Tail. Protect yourself. Make yourself visible. Today's farmers don't just have to know how to farm the land. We also have to know how to farm the highway. Managing traffic has become just as important as managing crops. At the end of the day, we all want the same thing. We want to get home safely. We want to harvest a good crop. We want to spend time with our families. Life is good. Let's do everything we can to keep it that way.

A Small Delay Can Make A Big Difference

As summer continues, motorists are more likely to encounter farm equipment on Kentucky roads. Most farm equipment travels only 15 to 25 mph and may require extra room to turn or maneuver. Drivers should slow down, maintain a safe distance and pass only when they have a safe, clear view. Machinery may be wider than a traffic lane, and farmers making left turns may first move slightly to the right. Farmers also share responsibility for keeping roads safe. When possible, operators should pull off at a safe location to allow traffic to pass and use lights, turn signals and reflective slow-moving vehicle emblems to help motorists anticipate their movements.

Agriculture remains an important part of the local economy, and farmers are often friends and neighbors working to produce food and other products communities depend on. A little patience and courtesy from both motorists and farmers can prevent accidents and save lives. This season, remember: Share the Road.



Changing The World One Coin At A Time

“As of today, I have personally shook 3,621 hands.” That’s Dale Dobson, who never needs an introduction, about his experience in the Raising Hope Challenge Coin initiative.

As director of Farm Safety and Rural Health for the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, he’s known all around the state, but not just for his three decades of service and dedication to farmers’ health and safety.

Dale is also known for his handshake, a solid and firm one, while staring you in the eyes. He asks for a promise in exchange for a coin, and it’s a promise that’s very close to his heart – so he means it, and you feel it.

“When I gave you that coin in Elizabethtown, I asked you for something, didn’t I?” Dale repeats the request, which is to reach out if you’re down, to call him, a friend or the 988 National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline imprinted on the back of the coin.

And, he adds three simple words: “You are appreciated.”

Dr. Cheryl Witt, co-creator and health lead of Raising Hope, tracked farmers after getting a coin. She found they didn’t throw them away, like they would a mental health pamphlet. They keep them on their truck dashboards or in their wallets. Some pass them on to other farmers, asking for the promise, pledging the same support and appreciation.

Beyond her reputation as a PhD nurse-scientist and rural health researcher, she’s also a multi-generational farmer in Mercer County.

Cheryl tells a story of a suicidal man whose friends kept him on the phone until support could reach him for help. “They kept reminding him, ‘You made a promise to Dale. You gave your word.’ And it worked.”

Her findings were published in the Journal of Agromedicine and archived in the library of the National Institute of Mental Health.

Dale said KDA and Raising Hope have helped make 20,000 coins. They have helped other states start their own programs.

“I never thought it would go this far,” Dale said.

(At the time of Dale’s death, he had personally handed out 3,657 challenge coins.)



FFA programs across the state have taken the Raising Hope Challenge Coin initiative to a new level. Students have gone through great lengths to let local farmers know they are appreciated! Shown left, Elliott County FFA President Jackson Kidd presented Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell with a challenge coin. Below, Cyrus Bivens, president of LaRue County FFA last year and State Sentinel this year, presents a coin to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins.



FFA Rises to Challenge With Local Outreach

As the Challenge Coin Initiative has grown and spread, co-creator Dale Dobson was particularly proud of the youth involved in the project. Raising Hope handed out grants to different FFA groups in order to create their own coins to deliver with a handshake and support.

“Two years ago, February of 2024, I got the opportunity to shake hands with Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins and give her a challenge coin on behalf of KDA,” Cyrus Bivens said. He not only designed LaRue County FFA’s own coin, but also helped create a collaboration with the HOSA chapter for future health professionals.

Cyrus is outgoing president of LaRue County FFA, and now a state officer. He wanted FFA’s events, like the farmer appreciation breakfast, to incorporate some of Raising Hope’s initiatives, such as free health screenings. Attendance jumped from around 80 to 150 farmers at last year’s event.

“This is something to show the value that someone has put on you ... they value your life, who you are as a person,” he said.

Growing up surrounded by farmers, Cyrus said he’s seen all sides to the industry. He has

witnessed the good years and the lean years.

“Thankfully, I’ve never had to see the effects of farmer suicide, but I know what can lead to that buildup. Things like this are what we need to push with the challenge coin.”

Over in Elliott County, Jackson Kidd is current president of his FFA chapter and regional secretary. He and his team made a list of “farmers we knew we needed to hit. We would split up the county and hand the coins out.”

His chapter also designed their own, and Jackson said the response from farmers was varied – at first.

“They were surprised; no one was expecting it. What shocked us though was at first, they thought we were asking for donations. After it set in – what we were doing and telling them how much we appreciate them and what they’ve done for our ag community – you could tell a change in them.”

Jackson said some loved seeing young people who are really passionate about agriculture.

“That’s why it’s important for us to do. I think it means more coming from our generation. Seeing that younger people show they care

about farmers, that meant a lot to them.”

It meant a lot to Jackson to be able to give a coin to Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell.

Jackson said he plans to keep going with the program and applying for grants to do more with it.

“Farmers do a lot for our program. It’s not just about preventing suicide, it’s more of wanting to tell farmers we thank them for what they do. Without them, our program would not be here.”

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the United States.

988

SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

Dobson Teams With ‘City Kid’ to Spread Message Through TV Projects

(Dale Dobson made what some might consider an unusual alliance with producer Samuel Goldberg. Sam shared their story after being asked to speak at Dale’s funeral. Here are excerpts from Sam’s eulogy:)

If I were to put a title to this eulogy it would be: “An Unlikely Friendship.”

The rough-around-the-edges country boy and the fancy city kid. The farm educated safety administrator and the ivy league movie producer. The volunteer firefighter...and the guy who might cry from a paper cut.

But in truth, Dale Dobson became more than just my friend. He became my brother. And these past few years, that is how we referred to one another.

with an unmatched enthusiasm that I came to know and love.

There was passion, kindness and raw honesty. I knew from that first phone call that my life had changed forever, for the better.

From that day forward Dale moved mountains to make sure that we got SILO made. And we did, in the summer of 2018, in and around LaRue and Nelson counties. Kentucky had become a blessed second home for my wife and me. And Dale became the head of our new, extended family.

Without Dale, SILO – and its impact on farm safety – does not exist. And neither does our most recent TV project, Perfect Sundays, which tackles the subject of farmer mental health; a project that Dale directly inspired by telling me a story about a friend who had taken his own life. Dale looked me in the eye that evening and made me promise to make the next farm project about suicide.

I took that promise to heart. And because of Dale, a group of investors, filmmakers and a community he helped build felt compelled to prioritize something that he knew in his heart needed to happen.

That was the power of this great man.

And in the wake of his friend’s passing, Dale channeled his own pain and made something of it. He started Raising Hope. He handed out thousands of challenge coins.

He changed the game. Dale wasn’t someone who



toiled in the uncertainty of failure. He was someone who bravely and boldly found solutions, even to the toughest problems. And he had enough faith in humanity to keep trying, despite the obstacles in his way.

He was the real deal. He had all of the attributes that define this great country: grit, determination, generosity, ingenuity, and love.

Dale Dobson was my hero. There is now a gaping hole in the world we all live in. A hole that will not be easily filled. But there are countless of us who were inspired by his loyalty, kindness and hope, and we will continue building on his incredible legacy.

He Changed the World

A few months ago when Dale shared his cancer diagnosis with me, he choked up on the phone and said, “Sam, SILO has changed my world.” I said back to him,

“Dale, you have changed the world.”

He was the best of us. And I am going to miss him terribly. But I am going to honor him every day by making the world a better place the way he would want me, and all of us, to do.

Dale, I love you brother. Rest in peace.

Dale Dobson and Raising Hope are featured in the 6-episode TV series, available nationwide on Sept. 1. To watch all 6 episodes of the series visit perfectsundaystv.com and use the code “Raising-Hope” at checkout.



Life is Good



By Sharon Burton
Publisher,
The Farmer's Pride

(This was written in August prior to the death of Dale Dobson)

This is the third edition of the Raising Hope printed edition, and it has by far been the most challenging, the most personal, and possibly the most important.

Raising Hope is a project that comes from the heart. The people involved are passionate about Kentucky farmers, their health and their success.

My role in this project is to bring together the vision and hope of the

people involved and to package it in a way that helps our farm families make wise decisions and realize how much they are valued. It is mailed out to hundreds of thousands of Kentucky families – farmers and nonfarmers – in hopes that they will also realize the value of, first, our farm families, and second, each other. The message is pretty basic: we need to take care of our neighbors, and we need to take care of ourselves.

Does that sound like a challenging role? It is, and it's an important one I am honored to carry. This edition is different, however, because life got in the way.

First, the leader of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Jonathan Shell, lost his father, who died unexpectedly. As a farm family, losing the patriarch is heart wrenching. For those left to carry on, it's deeply personal.

Then our leader of KDA's Division of Farm Safety and Rural Health, Dale Dobson, learned that he had a health battle on his hands.

Their stories are theirs to tell, but I will say that their personal experiences have directly led the direction for this edition of Raising Hope.

During an early planning meeting with Dale and Dr. Cheryl Witt – another leader we can't do without for this project – our message became clear. First, Dale's mantra has become, "Life is Good."

As we talked about the struggles of handling a farm estate after the loss of a family member, and we talked about fighting medical unknowns, we had our theme: LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE; PLAN YOUR LEGACY.

Sometimes the reality that this life is short hits us head-on in ways we can't ignore. Those times are a reminder that we should treasure every day. They are also a reminder to take the time to take care of ourselves – whether it be a visit to the doctor or to put safety measures in place before entering a grain bin or taking farm equipment onto a highway.

Then there is that ugly reminder that we won't be on this Earth forever – and it honors the ones we leave behind if we plan our own legacy. Make decisions now so their time of mourning can allow them to do just that.

Kentucky farm families are blessed to have people like Commissioner Shell, Dale Dobson and Dr. Cheryl Witt in their corner. I am honored to be part of Raising Hope. Let this edition of Raising Hope remind you that you are valued and encourage you to take care of you and your loved ones. Because above all else, life is good.

Shared Vision, Valued Friendship



Dr. Cheryl D. Witt, PhD, RN
University of Ky. Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, Extension Specialist Senior-Ag Nurse, Ky. Department of Agriculture Rural Health and Safety Division
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It is difficult to put into words the legacy of someone like Dale Dobson because his impact cannot be measured only by the programs he created, the positions he held, or the statistics that demonstrate the extraordinary difference he made.

Dale's true legacy lives in people – in the farmers who returned home safely to their families, the first responders better prepared because of his training, the young people who learned to work safely on the farm, and those who found hope during some of the darkest moments of their lives.

I had the privilege of knowing Dale in two very special ways. Professionally, he was my colleague, partner, mentor, and one of my greatest supporters. Personally, he was one of my very best friends.

Dale and I shared a vision that became much more than our work. We wanted Kentucky farmers and farm families to be safe, healthy, and able to remain where they belonged and wanted to be – in their fields, barns, equipment sheds, and farming communities – for as long as possible. We understood that protecting Kentucky agriculture meant protecting the people who make agriculture possible.

Dale devoted his career to that mission.

When he began his work in farm safety, Kentucky was losing more than 50 people each year to farm-related fatalities. Today, that number has fallen to fewer than 12 annually. Dale helped make that possible.

He also helped develop Kentucky's grain bin rescue training, equipping first responders with specialized knowledge for emergencies when minutes can mean the difference between life and death. Farmers have survived grain bin entrapments because responders knew what to do. That may be one of the clearest examples of Dale's legacy: people are alive today because he cared enough to see a problem and do something about it.

Dale also recognized that keeping farmers safe required caring for their minds as well as their bodies. Together, we helped establish Raising Hope, bringing greater awareness, education, resources, and support to the physical and mental health needs of Kentucky's agricultural community. Dale's Challenge Coin Farmer Suicide Prevention Program carried that commitment further, placing a tangible message of hope into the hands of farmers and families across Kentucky.

He was especially passionate about agricultural youth. Dale understood that a farm safety lesson taught to a child travels home. He was not simply preventing injuries today; he was helping change the safety culture of Kentucky agriculture for generations to come.

For me, however, there is another part of Dale's legacy that statistics and programs will never capture. Having a best friend who shared the same vision – and knowing that person was always by your side to fight the uphill battles – is a friendship one can never forget. Dale was a servant leader in the truest sense. He did not simply talk about making a difference – he spent his life doing it.

Those of us who continue this work now have a responsibility to carry his legacy forward. For me, that responsibility is deeply personal. I will continue fighting for the vision Dale and I shared: to keep Kentucky farmers and farm families safe, healthy, hopeful, and doing what they love for as long as possible.

I will forever be grateful that I had the opportunity to work beside Dale, but even more grateful that I had the privilege of calling him my friend.

Thank you, Dale, for walking beside me, believing in our mission, fighting those uphill battles with me, and most of all, for being my friend. Your work is not finished. Those of us who loved you and believed in the vision will carry it forward.

Estate Planning is Essential for Farm Families



Joshua Wilson
LUTCF, CLU, FSCP
Estate Planner II
Advanced Markets & Sales Support Field Team
Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance

I have never met anyone in the agricultural industry who did not take pride in their hard work and their stewardship of the land.

Farmers dedicate their lives to building, improving, and caring for their operations. However, there comes a time when those farms and the values behind them must transition to the next generation.

According to a Forbes.com article on estate planning, 68% of Americans do not have a will in place. An additional LegalShield survey found that 58% of U.S. adults have experienced or knew someone who faced family conflict due to inadequate estate planning. Within my job as an estate planner, I often hear clients say the following statements – "They know what I want," or "It'll be their problem when I'm gone." But true stewardship extends beyond

caring for the land during your lifetime – it also means preparing the next generation to continue that legacy. Estate planning can be a critical step that everyone should be thinking about, not just the ultra-wealthy. Taking the time to put your wishes into writing and organizing your estate properly can be one of the most important gifts you can leave your family. Sometimes it is complicated, but the process can also be much simpler than people expect.

Two of the most common approaches to estate planning are will-based planning and trust-based planning.

Will-Based Planning

A will can be an effective estate planning tool for families with straightforward assets and a less complex estate. A will is designed to clearly document your wishes and provide guidance for how your assets should be distributed. However, depending on state law and circumstances, some wills may be subject to probate, which may require court oversight of the estate administration process before it is finalized.

Trust-Based Planning

A trust may offer advantages in certain circumstances. Assets held in a properly designed and funded trust may avoid probate, which allows certain assets to be distributed outside of the probate process. Unlike probate, which becomes part of the public record, a trust may provide greater privacy for your family's affairs (though depending on litigation may not always be confidential). It may help your wishes to be carried out and assets to be distributed according to the plan you have established.

Other Estate Planning Documents to Consider

In addition to a will or trust, every comprehensive estate plan may also include other important documents depending on individual circumstances. These typically include durable financial and medical powers of attorney, HIPAA authorization forms that allow designated individuals to access your medical information, and a living will or advance healthcare directive that outlines your healthcare preferences if you are unable to communicate them yourself.

Individuals should consult qualified legal counsel or tax advisors regarding whether a will, trust, and/or other estate planning documents are appropriate for their situation. The information presented in this article is for educational purposes only, and should not be viewed as tax, legal, or accounting advice.

Southern Farm Bureau® Life Insurance Company in Jackson, MS offers all Kentucky Farm Bureau members consultation services of an estate planner to discuss their estate planning needs. However, there are also other resources within your community to assist in the completion and execution of these important documents.

The care and dedication you have invested in your farm deserves the same level of attention when planning for its future. Estate planning is about more than transferring assets – it's about helping to protect your legacy, assisting in the preservation of family relationships, and helping to support the operation you've worked so hard to build so it can continue according to your wishes for generations to come.

What Is a Living Will and Why Do You Need One?

Most people spend time planning for important milestones in life, but few plan for unexpected medical emergencies. A living will is one of the most important documents you can have because it allows you to make your healthcare wishes known before a crisis occurs.

What Is a Living Will?

A living will is a legal document that explains the types of medical treatment you would or would not want if you become seriously ill or injured and are unable to commu-

nicate your decisions. It provides guidance to your family and healthcare providers during difficult situations and helps ensure that your wishes are respected.

Why Should You Have One?

- It gives you control over your future medical care.
- It reduces the burden on family members who may otherwise have to make difficult decisions without knowing your wishes.
- It can help prevent disagreements among loved ones about your care.

- It provides peace of mind, knowing your preferences are documented.
- Every adult – regardless of age or current health – should consider completing a living will. Accidents and unexpected illnesses can happen at any time, making advance planning an important part of protecting yourself and your family.

Who Can Help?

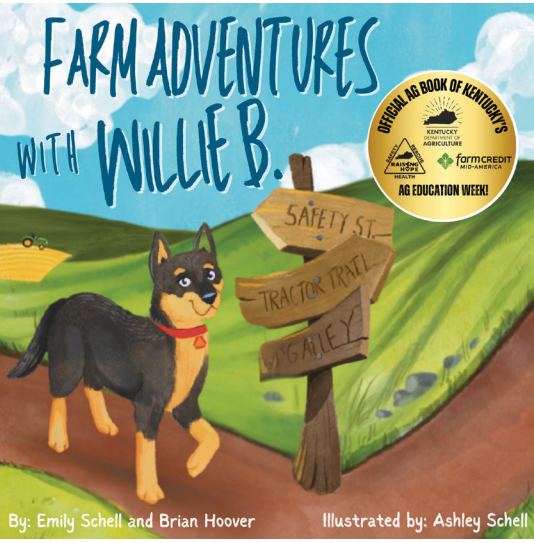
- Your healthcare provider or hospital.
- An attorney who specializes in estate planning or elder law.

- Your state's advance directive resources.
 - Healthcare social workers or patient advocates, who can explain your options and help you complete the appropriate forms.
- After completing your living will, discuss your wishes with your family and healthcare provider, and keep copies in a place where they can be easily accessed if needed.
- Planning today can provide comfort, clarity, and confidence for you and your loved ones tomorrow.

KDA is ‘All in for Ag Education!’

Will Willie B. be careful? Will Willie B. make wise choices? Those are the questions Kentucky elementary students will explore this fall as they follow the adventures of a real farm dog in “Farm Adventures with Willie B.,” the featured book for Kentucky’s 2026 fall All In for Ag Education Week.

More than 700 public elementary schools



across the commonwealth will receive a copy of the book, along with a Willie B. stuffed dog and standards-based literacy lessons for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Through Willie B.’s farm adventures, students are encouraged to think critically about making wise decisions while learning about Kentucky agriculture.

The Ag Book is a partnership among the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Farm Credit Mid-America and Raising Hope. It is part of Kentucky’s All In for Ag Education Weeks, a statewide initiative led by Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell, Lt. Gov. Jacqueline Coleman and Education Commissioner Robbie Fletcher to increase access to agriculture education in schools. Bethany Mattingly, KDA’s Division Director for Agriculture Education and Outreach, does an outstanding job leading the program and bringing agriculture to life for Kentucky students.

The initiative supports educators with classroom resources aligned to Kentucky’s academic standards while connecting students to real-world agricultural careers and problem-solving through hands-on activities, contests and com-

munity engagement.

Resources and lesson plans can be found at: www.kyagr.com/AgEdWeek.

The 2026-27 All In for Ag Education Weeks are scheduled for Sept. 21-25, 2026, and March 15-19, 2027. The fall observance will feature the statewide distribution of **Farm Adventures with Willie B.**, introducing students to agriculture through the eyes of one curious canine.



Ky. Farmers: *Please Join Us!*

Farmer Appreciation Day to celebrate agriculture, safety and career opportunities

Farmers, students and community members are invited to celebrate Kentucky agriculture during the Fourth Annual Farmer Appreciation Day on Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. EDT at The Center for Rural Development in Somerset. The free event will combine farm safety education, health services, career exploration and recognition of Kentucky farmers.

The day’s activities will begin at 10 a.m. with free health screenings, a healthcare and agriculture career fair, FFA chapter highlights, farm safety equipment displays and demonstrations, and exhibits featuring farm equipment. Fire and EMS agencies will also participate, and a helicopter demonstration is planned.

A new career fair will spotlight opportunities in agriculture, healthcare, education, small businesses and nonprofit organizations throughout the region. Organizers hope the event will connect high school FFA and HOSA members, advisors, community colleges, employers and local businesses with students and others interested in careers that support rural Kentucky.

Activities will pause from 11 a.m. until noon for the Farmer Appreciation Day presentations and annual awards ceremony honoring those who have made outstanding contributions to agriculture.

Lunch will be provided at noon by the Kentucky Cattlemen’s Association.

Attendees will also have two opportunities, at 10 a.m. and again at noon, to view Perfect Sundays, a new farming series being introduced as part of the event. Organizers previously announced the special screening as one of several new additions to this year’s program, along with a healthcare and agriculture career fair, a Raising Hope blood drive, and CPR and Stop the Bleed training.

Farmer Appreciation Day is held during All In for Ag Week and Farm Safety Week and is designed to bring together farmers, healthcare professionals, agricultural leaders, FFA and HOSA chapters, businesses and community organizations while emphasizing farm safety, rural health and the future of Kentucky agriculture.

Farmer Appreciation Day

The Center for Rural Development

2292 S. Hwy. 27, Somerset, Ky.

Wednesday, September 23, 2026

10 a.m. – 1 p.m. EDT

Free Registration, Health Screenings, Farm Safety Demonstrations, CPR & Stop the Bleed Training, Farming Film Showing, Food, Healthcare & Ag Career Fair

Raising Hope, ARH collaboration takes free resources to Ky. farmers

Together, the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and Appalachian Regional Healthcare – and all of their county, regional and state partners – provide focused care for the agriculture industry as they meet people where their needs are for rural health, safety and rescue – on the farm and in the community.

This year, the ongoing collaboration resulted in a dedicated heart health solution: the Carotid Ultrasound Screening program targeting heart disease and stroke – the leading causes of death in Kentucky.

ARH and KDA offer free carotid ultrasound screenings, echocardiograms, ABIs, cholesterol checks, A1C checks, stroke risk assessment and non-diagnostic consultations in a one-stop screening site on or off of the ARH mobile clinic or KDA MASH Barn. These screenings can detect the silent conditions that lead to heart attacks and strokes before they happen in five minutes or less of time.

Since the partnership began,

more than 3,000 screenings, nearly 100 events and countless health education resources have been created and distributed to increase access to rural health across for farmers and farm families.

An additional dedicated focus on mental health with Raising Hope comes through farm safety and rescue services. To ensure access and clinical resources, KDA and ARH partnership maintains a special hotline available 24/7 for

those seeking non-emergency, mental health support.

Anyone in Kentucky can call 606-487-6160. This ARH-operated, health hotline connects people directly to resources in their local community for agriculture, mental health support and more. The team has dedicated communications efforts to destigmatize mental health needs in the agricultural community with both public health and clinical support.

CALL 606-487-6160 at any time to speak with a trained ARH member for mental health support with specific training to help Kentucky farmers.

From Ag Commissioner Jonathan Shell: Ky. Agriculture Has Lost a Champion

From Page 1

Prevention Program, reminding countless Kentuckians that hope is always within reach.

Dale’s brainchild was the first-of-its-kind rollover tractor simulator. It visually demonstrates the importance of installing a rollover protective structure on tractors.

He also understood the necessity of teaching young people the importance of farm safety. If you were a student or teacher during

the past 25 years in Kentucky, I hope you were fortunate enough to experience one of his Rallies for Life. Dale staged rescue simulations of mock ATV accidents at schools, highlighted by a dramatic helicopter landing and airlifting the “victims” to the hospital. He knew that educating one child could positively influence an entire family.

But, his impact on Kentucky agriculture cannot be measured simply by programs created — it

is measured in lives saved. When Dale began this mission, Kentucky experienced more than 50 farm-related fatalities each year. Today, that number has fallen to fewer than 12.

Dale leaves behind a legacy that will continue to protect Kentucky farmers for generations to come. His compassion, innovation, and unwavering commitment to agriculture made our Commonwealth a safer and stronger place.

Kentucky lost a true servant leader and I, along with countless others Dale has met over the years, have lost a friend.

At the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, we are grateful for his extraordinary service to Kentucky agriculture and will continue to honor his memory by carrying forward the work he cared so deeply about.

Rest in peace, Dale. We’ll take it from here.

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